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**New directions for teacher education: Investigating school/university partnership in an increasingly school-based context**

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## **Abstract**

As school-led teacher education becomes more prevalent in England and elsewhere, new challenges arise for university and school-based teacher educators. Against this policy backdrop we discuss the challenges faced by universities and schools. We draw on findings from our small-scale case study which looked at the practice of a group of school-based teacher educators working in a Third Space with a boundary broker from the university sector. From these findings we suggest a form of teacher education that synthesises school and university expertise in ways which have the potential to **develop new directions for partnership from** both sides of a supposed boundary. We discovered that Third- Space activity has the potential to bring about a shift in school-based teacher educators' practices, both with student teachers and in their everyday teaching. There was some evidence that there could be benefits to schools and universities. In particular, it seemed that the skilful use of boundary brokering, aimed at the fostering of the second-order teaching skills of teaching others to teach, was significant. We propose a series of ideas for how boundary brokering within Third-Space activity has the potential **to suggest new directions for** the role of both school-based and university teacher educators.

## **Keywords**

Third Space; boundary broker; school-led teacher education; second-order teaching skills;

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## Introduction

Internationally, initial teacher education is high on the political agenda as a 'policy problem' (Cochran-Smith 2016), often because of 'econometric' reasoning (Yeh 2009, Hanushek and Woessmann 2010, Hanushek 2011) that links levels of education and teacher quality to economic success. As such, there is intense scrutiny of the relationship between teacher education, teacher quality and learning in school (see for example: Barber and Mourshed 2007, Mourshed *et al.* 2010). Often such arguments are used as a political fulcrum for mandating moves to more school-based models, prompting Gilroy (2014, p. 445) to suggest that the impetus for such developments frequently emanates from policy imperatives that are 'top-down, often evidence-light but ideology-heavy'. Regardless of how these trends may be interpreted politically and philosophically, the reality is that internationally there is recognition of the desirability of spending a considerable amount of time in school (Edwards 2014, p. xii), leading to an expansion of school-based routes (Tatto and Furlong 2015, p. 146). Morrison (2016) reports on the current review of teacher education in Australia as being driven by a perceived need to make Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes more practical (Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group, 2014) and highlights the importance given to 'important understandings that collaborative partnerships between universities and schools are beneficial for stakeholders and open new spaces to productively prepare PSTs (Preservice teachers) for career entry'. Zeichner (2015, p.20) reports that, despite about two thirds of teachers in the US continuing to be prepared by colleges and universities,

‘recently a (...) hybrid form of teacher education has re-emerged that is more school-based than the traditional university’. He goes on to note (2015, p.23) that ‘even when school and universities are aware of each other’s world, they do not necessarily share a vision of quality teaching and teacher preparation’. Within Europe, England, where our study took place, is regarded as an ‘outlier’ with its increasingly school-led system (Hulme *et al.* 2016, p. 219). This trend would seem set to intensify still further with the proposals in the Education White Paper:

*Educational Excellence Everywhere* (DfE 2016):

We will continue to move to an increasingly school-led ITT system which recruits enough great teachers in every part of the country, so that the best schools and leaders control which teachers are recruited and how they are trained (DfE 2016, para. 2.22).

The research presented in this paper focusses on school-led teacher education in England, and new ways of working for university and school teacher educators. We explore how this new role for schools offers distinctive challenges, none more so than for school-based teacher educators (SBTEs) who are now often fulfilling the role previously undertaken by universities (Brown *et al.* 2016). White *et al.* (2015) capture the nature of these challenges succinctly through the use of the term ‘dual-role professionals’ because of being both a school teacher and teacher educator, the latter being someone who ‘renders a substantial contribution to the development of students into competent teachers’ (Koster *et al.* 2005, p. 157). The European Commission (2013, p. 18) provides a useful insight into the teacher educator role by emphasising the need to acquire and develop the requisite ‘knowledge, skills and values in order to be effective’. Our focus is on the development of the relevant ‘knowledge, skills and values’ and the possible role of a university in fostering these

potentially new professional attributes. Although based in England, we suggest that the debate we present here will be of interest beyond England as the professional role of teacher educators in both schools and universities develops worldwide.

Our small-scale study was designed to explore potential new dimensions in teacher education. We frame this study through a lens of Third-Space activity (Bhabha 1994, Moje *et al.* 2004) as a tool for 'critical engagement' (Routledge, 1996) and the development and integration of new knowledge. It builds on our previous research into developing partnerships between universities and schools through Third-Space activity (Burch and Jackson 2013) where we looked at process, and then a general investigation of Third Space (Jackson and Burch 2016) in the context of teacher education. Throughout our research, we have maintained our Third-Space definition in this context as:

Third-Space working suggests coming out of our normal working environment (school or university) and into a neutral 'Third Space' to design, develop and deliver teacher education with jointly shared understanding and vision (Burch and Jackson 2013).

Partnership, we suggest, is more effective if it is collaborative as in Third-Space working, which means the school and the university work *together*, rather than *in parallel*. For this next part of our continuing investigation, we wanted to consider how the fundamental tenets of Third Space, which we rehearse below, could actually be seen to be effective in practice with particular respect to SBTEs. Further, in order to investigate the role of the university in the new landscape of school-led teacher education, we also consider the notion of a 'boundary broker' from a university

perspective who works to effect successful Third-Space working by bringing together different perspectives within the context of designing workshops for pre-service teachers. We see a distinction between a facilitation role and a brokerage role, the latter expanding and adding to the former. We return to tease out what we mean by this later, but note here that brokerage is a challenging task, not least because as Kubiak *et al.* (2015, p.82) suggest, the boundary broker is positioned as a 'liminal inside-outsider constantly faced with the challenge of how to make the practice of one community of practice relevant to another'.

The research questions we devised for our study were:

- Do the SBTEs experience any personal ontological and conceptual shift in relation to both their own teaching and their new and wider role within teacher education as a consequence of working in a Third Space?

This question was formulated to discover whether Third Space itself was beneficial to the individual SBTE and if so, what it was about Third Space which afforded this beneficial shift.

- Is there any evidence to suggest that Third-Space activity brings benefits and, if so, to whom?

As an extension to the first question, this follow-up sought to interrogate the point of Third Space rather than other forms of dialogue and to wonder how far its effect might reach.

- Does there appear to be a need for the involvement of a university perspective to guide the SBTEs and act as boundary broker? Is this involvement necessary initially and/or over time?

Did our participants value input from a boundary broker versed in both first and second-order teaching skills? How long would this kind of input be welcomed?

Against the backdrop of unprecedented changes to teacher education in England (Murray and Mutton 2016), we shall be **seeking ways to considering new ways of working in** teacher education in schools and in universities. By this we mean taking the expertise of those in **each arena** and, through the means of Third-Space activity, reshaping what it is to be a teacher educator — both in school and university — in a teacher-education environment that is becoming more school-based and school-led. **Teacher education should and does continue to evolve across the world. Our intention is to consider how to add to that evolution in a positive manner.**

## **Theoretical background**

### ***Becoming a teacher educator***

Despite teacher education being high on the political agenda as a ‘policy problem’ (Cochran-Smith 2016), the academic role played by teacher educators is an under-researched area (McNicholl *et al.* 2013, Griffiths *et al.* 2014, White 2014). The focus of the research concerning teacher educators heretofore has tended to concentrate on the difficulties inherent in becoming a university teacher educator, often employing issues of identity as a focus (see, *inter alia*, Boyd and Harris 2010, McKeon and Harrison 2010, Field 2012). The majority of studies in this area have come from self-study approaches (Williams *et al.* 2012) in which university teacher educators have plotted their personal ‘trials of transition’ (Field 2012) from the ‘first-



order teaching skills' of teaching pupils to the 'second-order skills' of teaching others to teach (Murray and Male 2005). And it is with these second-order skills that the chief challenge lies because these skills entail, according to Loughran (2006, p. 66), 'articulating a knowledge of practice', a process fraught with difficulties since it is a complex task that demands 'considerable awareness of oneself, pedagogy and students' (Loughran and Berry 2005, p. 193). Lunenberg and Korthagen (2009) likewise emphasise the high-level demands in helping student teachers to capitalise on their developing expertise. Even more demanding, they claim, is the 'the task of effectively connecting experience, theory, and practical wisdom' (p. 238).

The school teachers in our study were not becoming university teacher educators and were thus free of the very demanding relationship-maintenance role with schools, as well as issues relating to student well-being (Ellis *et al.* 2011). In particular, the teachers in our study were not encumbered with the challenges of the university socialisation process (Morberg and Eisenschmidt 2009) that is often associated with, as outlined above, a whole host of identity-related issues. Thus this situation was very different both in its scope and challenges. Our focus was on just two days of workshops run for PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) student teachers and the SBTEs' development from the 'first-order teaching skills' of teaching pupils to the 'second-order skills' of teaching others to teach. It is our contention that this is where the Third-Space activity and the role of the 'boundary broker' come into their own especially, perhaps, to create a symbiosis between craft and theory-related elements. Arguably, Third Space could harness the potential of what Haggis (2009) calls 'troubling binaries' such as theory/practice, university-led/school-led, training/education. Teacher education based on a collaborative model of

working together suggests a place for both school and university input to form a fusing of the expertise of both (see Jackson and Burch 2016). Our insertion of a 'boundary broker' into the process came from a conjecture that working together in a Third Space does not simply 'happen' but does itself need a set of expert skills to lead to success.

### ***Conception of Third Space and boundary crossing***

In their mapping of research on partnership in teacher education, Lillejord and Børte (2016, p. 558) found that 'because partnerships are dynamic and participants continuously change roles and responsibilities, it is difficult to create a Third Space, working together with a common moral purpose to create new knowledges, for collaboration in teacher education' (p. 558). That Third Space is not an 'easy' solution is echoed by Soja (1996). He presented Third Space as a place where 'everything comes together' (p. 56) and anything that causes the fragmentation of Third Space 'into separate specialized knowledges or exclusive domains – even on the pretext of handling its complexity – destroys its meaning and openness' (p. 57). For him, 'such an all-inclusive simultaneity opens up endless worlds to explore and, at the same time, presents daunting challenges' (p. 57). The potential of Third Space, despite the challenges, is recognised by Gutierrez *et al.* (1995, p. 445) who describe it as a place in which 'the joint construction of a new sociocultural terrain' is encouraged, thereby 'creating space for shifts in what counts as knowledge and knowledge representation'. Third Space can thus be conceptualised as a 'construction site' for ideas, an interactive space in which new meanings are generated and then explored through new forms of practice. However, Kozleski (2011, p. 257) suggests a word of caution. She advises that being together in a Third

Space requires that 'we suspend assumptions about being right and take the time to consider and explore the unfamiliar, question, and above all, listen to one another and possibly, silence the shrill critic within us all'. Thus we are reminded that Third Space is not without its challenges.

Lillejord and Børte (2016, p. 558) state clearly that processes of making explicit tacit knowledge between organisations within a Third Space, and thereby challenging norms to allow new thinking to evolve, 'do not, however, succeed without leadership'. If that leadership **were to be** represented by some sort of boundary broker, then what would be the attributes of that boundary broker and what does boundary crossing entail?

For Bakx *et al.* (2016, p. 82), 'Boundary crossing is not just an individual endeavour at the micro-level; it depends on a successful broker possessing boundary crossing skills and receivers who are willing to listen or get involved'. Successful boundary crossing entails 'specific personal factors (cognitive, flexible switching, communication/interaction skills, pro activity) and contextual factors are required in order to see an issue from another's perspective and to become 'brokers' (p. 86). However, in much of the literature on boundary crossing and Third Space there is no explicit mention of a boundary broker or a person with a similar role, the apparent assumption being that the bringing-together of diverse perspectives and practices is all that is required for the promotion of learning. According to Akkerman (2011) this is a misguided assumption. It could be argued that the explicit identification of different perspectives and the fostering of appropriate dialogic engagement to attend

to these differences are necessary in order to create new perspectives. Wenger adds to the perception of the importance of the role of the boundary broker:

The work of brokers is complex and it involves translation, coordination, and alignment between perspectives (Wenger 1998, p.109).

The complexity that Wenger notes here resonates with our study. We realised that bringing professionals together from the different yet highly related realms of school and university teacher education, each with their own perceptions of importance, relevance and methods, would be adventurous. Bakx *et al.* (2016, p. 77), drawing on Suchman (1994, p. 25 cited in Bakx *et al.* 2016), explore this further, employing the term boundary crossing to conceptualise the challenges faced by professionals when they enter unfamiliar domains and encounter differences which, to some extent, render them 'unqualified'. The notion of 'unqualified' in our study related to differences in domain-specific knowledge regarding first and second-order teaching skills and their associated practices; teaching children and young people and teaching student teachers.

Wenger continues his discussion of the work of brokers by explaining further the complexity of their task:

It also requires the ability to link practices by facilitating transactions between them, and to cause learning by introducing into a practice an element of another (Wenger 1998, p.109).

Here Wenger suggests that part of the role of a broker is to facilitate, to 'make things easier'. This brings up the question of whether a boundary broker is the same as a

facilitator and if it is not, what is the difference? Kubiak (2009, p. 15) notes in his research on brokerage and learning networks: 'Throughout the data collection period, brokers themselves were trying to make sense of their role. They produced their own publications reflecting upon and conceptualising the Facilitator role'. This mirrors to some extent the deliberations with which we have engaged and continue to engage. We would argue that facilitation is part of the boundary broker role and, for the purposes of our research project, have concluded that our use of the term boundary broker contains particular dimensions which make it unique from facilitation. Waitoller, Kozleski and Gonzalez (2016 p. 62) liken boundary-crossing practices to a couple learning to dance and having to cope with initially being tuned into and following different beats. Expanding this metaphor to school / university teacher education practice, part of the boundary broker role is to help with the merging of dance styles and beats to form a jointly-constructed beat guided by an insider knowledge of both 'dance styles'.

Waitoller *et al.* go on to say that 'participants engaged in a dance in which boundaries among institutions and professions were sustained and challenged'. For us a significant role of the boundary broker is to problematise practice, to constantly challenge the boundaries. Wenger (1998) suggests that brokers must be connected enough to the community of practice to have the legitimacy to be listened to but at the same time have enough distance to offer a different perspective which provides value to the community of practice. To allow this to happen, trust in, and the credibility of, the boundary broker is vital (Kubiak, 2009, p. 25).

Our conception of a boundary broker involves being skilled at striking a sensitive and sensible balance between challenge and support to allow new learning to flourish.

Third Space facilitated by a boundary broker might therefore possibly be a place in which to explore and confront the complexities of teaching, and of teaching others to teach. In our research, the boundary broker had what might seem an almost paradoxical role in the promotion of a sense of safety and security whilst challenging potentially long-held assumptions and encouraging the taking of risks. S/he needed to be able to help the SBTEs to cross the boundary between their first-order role as teachers to their newly acquired second-order role as teacher educators, making the practical theoretical and the theoretical practical through a recursive, theory-practice bridging-and-brokering process. In a Third Space it is important to believe, as Routledge (1996, p.406) suggests, that it is possible to 'inhabit these different sites, making each a space of relative comfort'. As the SBTEs progressed in this 'simultaneous coming and going in a borderland zone between different modes of action' (Routledge 1996, p. 416), were they aware of their identities shifting, was there any benefit from Third-Space working and did they value the boundary broker's input?

## **Research design**

As our purpose was to add to our understanding about the use of Third Space to enhance effective partnership between university and school-based teacher education, this study finds resonance with what Stake (1995, p.18) describes as an 'instrumental case study', 'one where a particular case is examined to provide insight into an issue or a refinement of theory'. Our particular case was that of a group of school-based teacher educators in a secondary school in England. We set out to

examine the professional learning processes at work when they came together to design, in a collaborative fashion within a Third Space, their workshops for a group of student teachers. We added to this a boundary broker to initiate and facilitate their working. Although the case itself was and is of interest to us, it is in fact 'of secondary interest' because, as Stake (1995, p.18) goes on to explain, 'it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else'. That 'something else' was the investigation of what worked and why, what did not work and why, and also, significantly, whether what we had seen in practice in this particular case could have value in other contexts.

### *Limitations*

Our case study is small scale. Although this is ostensibly due to constraints of resource and access to a suitable research site, there was a significant element of intention involved. The complexities inherent in our chosen areas of research – teaching, teacher education, Third-Space theory – coupled with the conclusion of our first research suggested that for successful working in a Third Space 'slow, measured process is key' (Burch and Jackson 2012). We see our study as inductive in design, working from 'the 'bottom' up, using the [SBTE] participants' views to build broader themes and generate a theory interconnecting the themes' (Creswell and Plano Clark 2007, p. 23). We thus felt it essential to present an individual case and to invite the reader to follow closely our learning journey. Generalisability of our findings is compromised by the nature of a small-scale case study which we do not expect to be directly applicable in other contexts. However, generalisability was not our intent; we intend to present what we discovered and thereby engender debate, inviting our readers to consider transferability of some of our findings to different

contexts which may 'lead to lessons learned that may be germane to a larger population or a different setting or another group' (O'Leary 2014, p. 62).

### *Methods*

We adopted a qualitative design featuring two sessions of non-participant observation where the researcher observed but sought not to bias or influence behaviour or response by her/his own presence (McBurney and White 2009, cited in Gray 2016, p. 412), and semi-structured interviews with SBTE participants. **The school chosen for the research was not known to the researcher and neither were any of the participants or their position in the school. This was important to minimise bias and 'maintain a dispassionate, objective ... approach to the research situation' (Punch and Oancea, 2015).** Ethical approval for the research was sought and gained from the funding university and all SBTE participants were sent participant information sheets and asked initially to give informed consent for observation and then subsequently for the interviews. The **five** SBTE participants in the research who were working together in a Third Space to design and run the workshops were **simply given the codes of** Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Teacher 3, Teacher 4 and Teacher 5. They had varying degrees of responsibility and seniority in the school, **but as Zeichner (2010:92) describes the Third Space as a 'transformative setting' which is less hierarchical in nature, thus encouraging working more closely together', it was important to keep the pseudonyms as impersonal as possible. Also it was important for the researcher to be in a position to consider whether within this Third Space the notion of 'flattened hierarchies' mentioned earlier was apparent.**

During the observation of the workshops, it was made clear to the student teachers why the researcher was observing their sessions with the five teachers, but also it



was stressed that they were in no way participants in the research and they were not the focus of the observation.

### *The boundary broker*

The third research question considers the need for the involvement of a university perspective provided by a boundary broker. The boundary broker in our study was a teacher educator who had worked in the university sector for many years. S/he had been engaged by the Teaching School running the scheme to support the SBTE participants in their journey into a world of teacher education which was new to them. The boundary broker worked to take the SBTE participant teachers from the space in which they were, that is to say as first-order practitioners, teachers of young people, into a Third Space where they worked together to become second-order practitioners, teacher educators. The boundary broker was fully cognisant of the purposes and methods of the research, but played no direct part in the research.

The sequence of events was:

- July 2015: Before the research started, the boundary broker ran a workshop for the five teachers to support them in their transition from teacher to teacher educator. This was not observed.
- November 2015: The five teachers presented a session to the student teachers. This was observed by the researcher (observation 1) to guide the formulation of the questions for the semi-structured interviews. The questions in the interviews were divided into the themes of the research questions.

- January 2016: The semi-structured interviews were carried out via Skype. All SBTE participants in the interviews were given a participant information sheet, a consent form to sign and a list of the questions before the interviews took place.
- February 2016: The boundary broker met with the five teachers to discuss their ideas for the up-coming session.
- March 2016: The five teachers presented a second session to the student teachers. This was observed by the researcher (observation 2) to ascertain whether there was any difference to the findings of the first session.

The interviews were conducted by Skype because of the distance and potential costs involved. Redlich-Amirav and Higginbottom (2014, p. 6) suggest that 'it is through this additional visual element offered by Skype (...) that the interview can remain, to a certain extent at least, a 'face-to-face' experience'. In practice it did make for flexibility and practicality in a busy school day. The SBTE participants were in a small separate room and the interviews were not disturbed. Redlich-Amirav and Higginbottom (2014, p. 8) point out the disadvantages of using Skype: 'time lags in conversation, which can break the flow of an interview; potential failure; and disconnections and loss of data'. The links did suffer from disconnection but both the researcher and the SBTE participants quickly refreshed the point in the conversation which they had reached and there was no loss of data. The sound of the interviews was recorded for purposes of analysis.

### *Analysis*

Brief field notes of the two workshops were taken by the researcher and the results compared and contrasted. The transcribed interviews were originally sorted under the interview questions and then aligned with the three research questions. The sorted interviews were then condensed to avoid repetition and anecdotal data and finally translated into a commentary which reflected the views of all the participants. This condensed version could then be used to find like-mindedness or areas of disagreement.

## **Results and Discussion**

The first session of non-participant observation was helpful in two ways: it highlighted many areas which could be explored in the subsequent interviews, and it suggested to the boundary broker areas of development to cover in her/his next session with the group. The SBTE participants acknowledged to the student teachers that the task before them (the SBTE participants) was, as Loughran and Berry (2005, p. 93) had suggested, a complex one with no one answer to questions about teaching, but multiple strands to explore. Although the SBTE participants were keen to stress the importance of reflection, they stated that only practical knowledge would be shared with the student teachers. In fact, they seemed to avoid discussion of theory and had a tendency at this stage to give answers rather than prompt them from the student teachers. One could conjecture that they felt safe within their identity as first-order practitioners; the relative comfort of different sites (Routledge 1996, p. 406) had not yet evolved. Any merging of ideas from a binary relationship of university and school was not apparent to the researcher at this stage.

By the time of the second non-participant observation, all the research interviews had taken place and the SBTE participants had been involved in another session with the boundary broker. There was clear evidence of development, 'innovative ideas' were beginning to emerge. This seemed to imply the boundary broker's skill in facilitating boundary crossing (Bakx *et al.* 2016, p. 82), and also that the participants had indeed been willing to engage in the process. Generally, the SBTEs seemed more confident; the ways in which they had worked together in a Third Space were subtly apparent in how they shared the session, acknowledging one another's differences but evidently united by moral purpose and comfortable with each other. This is reminiscent here of Bakx *et al.*'s (2016, p. 82) advice that boundary brokering is not an individual endeavour; without the SBTEs being willing to get involved, this result would arguably not have happened. Their reaction to theory had changed in that, although initially reticent, with encouragement from the boundary broker they were confident not only to ask the student teachers to report any aspects of theory they had come across in the last five months which had impacted on their practice, but also to link theory to practice themselves, suggesting nascent breaking down of possibly 'troubling binaries' (Haggis 2009). There was a feeling throughout this session that all the participants had felt themselves to be Suchman's (1994, p. 25 cited in Bakx *et al.* 2016, p. 77) 'unqualified' professionals in this new identity as teacher educators and that the boundary broker was aware of this and employed tactics to overcome their concerns. S/he encouraged the teachers to develop insights into their own practice. By doing this, the tacit dimension of their highly developed first-order skills could be made accessible, first of all to themselves, and then, utilising this new knowledge, ways could be developed to create activities in

which the student teachers could experience the what, how and why of a particular element of practice.

The first research question looked to discover whether the school-based teacher educators felt they had experienced any personal ontological and conceptual shift in relation to both their own teaching and their new and wider role within teacher education through the process they were undergoing. All SBTE participants felt that they had learned a lot both personally and professionally from this process:

‘It does help me value what’s important that I do every day and because of that I’ve changed my professional practice. I’ve probably personally evolved as well so it’s been a really worthwhile experience’ (Teacher 2).

In fact, the benefits to both personal and professional selves were seen as blurred in what Teacher 4 described as ‘a fluid process’. S/he felt that the process had developed her/him ‘because it’s allowed me to analyse and critique my own practice and sort of really allow me to delve into why I do things the way I do’. Within this Third Space they had drawn on their first-order skills and begun to articulate their knowledge of practice (Loughran 2006) which would lead them towards the development of new second-order skills of teaching others to teach (Murray and Male 2005).

All of this had affected both their work with the student teachers and with their school classes. It seemed clear that the SBTE participants’ practice had changed. Their practice with the student teachers had evolved over time as they became more

familiar with the demands of their new role, and their practice with their classes had shown 'significant difference' (Teacher 1). They were becoming more aware of themselves and their pedagogy (Loughran and Berry, 2005). Although all the SBTE participants had led CPD (Continuing Professional Development) with practising teachers previously, they all noted how different working with student teachers is. Teacher 4 suggested that established teachers 'have their own opinions already formed about the way things should be done. They also have experience ... in just simple things like noticing'. There was thus an acknowledgement by the SBTE participants that they had assumed that student teachers would have the same abilities as practising teachers and they had learned the necessity of challenging and indeed 'suspending' their assumptions (Kozleski 2011, p. 257). They were discovering for themselves the high-level demands in helping student teachers to capitalise on their developing expertise (Lunenberg and Korthagen 2009, p.238). Teacher 5 concluded that the fact that the student teachers were developing personally and becoming able to self-evaluate were major successes of the session. S/he equated this to notions of a Third Space created for the student teachers and the SBTE participants acting as boundary brokers to enable them to share thoughts, theories, and the practice they had witnessed. This is an interesting development of Third Space and boundary brokering, suggesting that it is not a static event but one that can develop and grow of its own volition and in its own directions once the seed is sown, becoming multi-layered, suggesting Soja's (1996) 'endless worlds to explore'. Teacher 2 considered one of the strengths of their delivery to ensure that the student teachers were learning was that 'It isn't a single voice; it's not a sole deliverer; there's a real value and depth to having a number of inputs'. Teacher 1 was specific about how s/he hoped the student teachers were learning: 'that there

isn't one way of doing things'. The Third Space was providing the forum for listening to one another (Kozleski 2011).

Part of the 'shift' we had been looking for concerned the place of theory in teaching. Had their attitude to theory changed as a result particularly of the boundary broker's work with them in preparing the sessions for the student teachers? The participants' answers were cautious and varied, perhaps feeling themselves 'unqualified' again; they seemed to be working out their stance with regard to theory. It was evidently something that had not featured in their work with CPD and practising teachers, nor in their normal engagement with practice in or out of the classroom. Teacher 5 for example did not immediately claim that theory was important but that the question about it 'was quite interesting'. With regards to the student teachers s/he felt that 'when you haven't really had much experience in the classroom, it's actually quite hard to make the links between using the theory and actually what actually goes on in the classroom'. It was more effective s/he thought: 'once you've been teaching for a few years, and you go back and revisit some of the theory and start looking at new theories - well it actually makes sense'. So, is Lunenberg and Korthagen's (2009) claim that joining theory and practical wisdom is demanding, indicative of a daunting attempt in the SBTE participants' eyes to link the two? Although Teacher 3 thought theory was 'relevant' and 'fascinating,' s/he admitted to being 'one of those jaded, cynical teachers when it comes to theories'. S/he prioritised the practical but supplied a very good reason for theory:

'I think you can read and read and read until you're blue in the face but I think really you need to be in the classroom and be there at the chalk face if you

like and apply the theories practically. Really I think the theorists just verbalise my practice’.

There would seem to be some evidence here to suggest that one model may have a tendency to subordinate another, rather than automatically leading to a synthesis.

The second research question asked whether there was any evidence to suggest that Third Space activity brings benefits and if so to whom? The idea of Third Space was understood by all SBTE participants and there was no hesitation in explaining their ‘take’ on this, although it must be noted that it was the boundary broker who had introduced them to the basic idea which they had then embraced. Unsolicited, all regarded Third Space as a place of ‘reflection and renewal’. Third Space was very useful; a ‘reflective space ... stress free ... [a place to go] with a purpose ... to meet with colleagues’ (Teacher 2). Teacher 3 had a fascinating description of her/his notion of Third Space:

‘where you kind of almost meet in the middle [of your personal and professional spaces] and take off your professional hat if you like, take off your private hat and meet in the middle ground and just talk with professionals about what you do, how you do it and how you enjoy doing it’.

They were jointly constructing ‘a new sociocultural terrain’ (Gutierrez *et al.* 1995, p. 445).

Hierarchy, it seemed for these SBTE participants, melts away in a Third Space and equality is achieved through mutual respect with regard to the merits of different



ways of working (Teacher 4). Unlike the school situation, the Third Space was definitely a non-hierarchical place in which no particular voice was dominant. Significantly the mutual respect was based upon the realisation that although each member of the group does things differently 'there are merits in each way'; as Teacher 1 expressed it: 'We've learnt to accommodate things. We just feed off each other'. Teacher 4 hinted at the underlying common vision:

'I think the way we worked together is quite passionately really about what we've been doing because we're all very excited about developing our own practice and ... it's kind of created quite a strong bond really'.

Teacher 2 pointed out that the Third-Space meetings with colleagues to consider and work with the student teachers were 'the most powerful meetings I have in school'. Teacher 5 summed it up well, taking Third Space beyond the bounds of her/his own school:

'Probably as professionals across the country, not just here, but everywhere [the message] is actually learn more from each other and how we do things and how we can take those [from] that Third Space again'.

This all sounded idyllic and as if Third Space is some kind of nirvana so we had to ask whether there had been any moments of differing opinion between members of the group and if so how had they been resolved. Teacher 4 explained 'there's been disagreements definitely and that comes from the fact that ... we're all individuals and we all do things in slightly different ways'. But it is the way these were dealt with that stopped them being 'outright rows' because of the mutual respect which realises each person's strengths; an understanding of where the other people are coming

from and appreciating the difference. 'We were quite open-minded and so really the disagreements became a strength'. Assumptions about being 'right are overcome by listening to one another – the shrill critic silenced' (Kozleski 2011, p. 257). This strength would be modelled with the students who would therefore get more varied viewpoints, some similar to their own and some not. The formation of the strength gained from the disagreement has been facilitated by discussion, according to Teacher 1, questioning one another in a non-threatening, but genuinely curious fashion: 'we've just asked the open sort of questions and then obviously if we've got valid reasons then we will change our opinions and sort of say "well, yes, OK"'. Teacher 5 pointed out the inevitability of differing opinions in any group of people. S/he linked this to the differing personalities which come together in any group of people, but the beauty of this, according to her/him is that 'the students actually enjoy ... that you've got a variety of different types of teachers who've got different experiences, different backgrounds, different subjects'. Resolution of difference for her/him was through inclusion of all personalities, all methods of teaching. Teacher 2 added the notion of 'professional' to the manner in which disagreements can be resolved; the professional stance which agrees that each teacher brings something to the table that will not suit all but is well founded. Our participants therefore seemed to have overcome the conflicts and tensions due to historical asymmetric power relations which Lillejord and Børte (2016, p. 3) detected in their study of Third-Space working.

The catalyst for the Third-Space working had been input from a boundary broker from a university teacher-education perspective. The third and last research question considered whether the SBTE participants thought there appeared to be any need

for the involvement of a boundary broker initially and/or over time. There was a general perception that university involvement in terms of boundary brokering was necessary and would probably continue to be so, recalling Akkerman's (2011) contention that the bringing-together of diverse perspectives and practices is all that is required for the promotion of learning is a 'misguided assumption'. According to Teacher 3 the boundary broker had a facilitating role, allowing the teachers to get 'together' to think about their own practice, talk about education; all of which is rare in the busy life of a school. Teacher 5 went further noting that being 'stretched' by the boundary broker helped make them aware of what they actually did as teachers:

'You don't really realise that you're doing it and I think it was that idea that we're actually quite skilled in what we do and obviously what we had to try and do was put something together which allowed trainee teachers to pick up on that and break apart the actual skills that we used as part of our day job really'.

As Teacher 4 explained, they realised that these were 'higher level students' compared to the school students that they were usually working with and the boundary broker had 'the educational knowledge'.

The SBTE participants had experienced little supplementary development over and above that provided by the boundary broker. Teacher 2 thought a boundary broker was definitely needed 'as a critical friend; an external view; somebody that brings some doubt, another perspective'; providing the necessary 'leadership' perhaps that Lillejord and Børte (2016, p. 558) consider essential. Teacher 1 agreed that the boundary broker was definitely needed and welcomed the complexity of the role of teacher educator:

'We needed that input and always we needed somebody to give us confidence. The boundary broker has challenged our preconceptions, the sort of run-of-the mill part of our daily job, s/he's actually challenged that and made us really think quite deeply about it and he has reintroduced to us to research and theory which we probably would not have really come across again'.

Both Teacher 3 and Teacher 5 noted the importance of the boundary broker as 'a stimulus' or 'a catalyst for some of the ideas that we've had and s/he's maybe made us think a little bit differently about what we were originally planning to do' (Teacher 5).

Teacher 1 articulated the view of most, but not all SBTE participants, that the boundary broker was and would continue to be necessary, suggesting that the 'coordination, and alignment between perspectives' (Wenger 1998, p.109) would not just happen. For her/him, there is an ongoing need:

'just to keep challenging us really and just to keep us informed of any new developments of any theory ... it just links everything together and yes, so I do think there is an ongoing need for it. Just that link really with somebody and to run ideas past as well'.

However, Teacher 3 did not think the boundary broker had challenged any of her/his 'perceptions' (sic) 'I think I'm very aware of what's happening in education; I'm very aware of what works in education'. Paradoxically however, Teacher 3 did feel there was a continuing need for a boundary broker, perhaps recognising the skills of communication, flexible switching (Bakx *et al.* 2016, p. 82), linking of practices,

facilitating of practices (Wenger 1998) and overall complexity of the role. The enthusiasm of the boundary broker had been crucial; 'allowed us to break the boundaries'. S/he saw the boundary broker as someone 'kind of fuelling our energy and fuelling our enthusiasm' and an important feature was that the boundary broker was somebody from outside the school 'because obviously when you're all within the school, other things take hold'. Teacher 4's view of the ongoing need for a boundary broker was: 'we will need that for continuing years forward and the reason for that is if we want to continue developing this – I mean teaching is changing all the time ... otherwise you get stagnation I guess'. The boundary broker had been the catalyst for a lot of the things that they'd come up with because s/he really 'stretched our ... limits' (Teacher 5). S/he felt that as they became 'more experienced, a little more astute at maybe developing that ourselves and maybe thinking 'actually do we need to go back to the drawing board and really think about what we've done?'" The need might diminish but certainly in the short term 'it's quite a powerful influence really in terms of what we've done and what we probably will do going forward in the short term'.

## **Conclusions**

As school-led teacher education becomes more prevalent, new challenges arise for both school-based and university teacher educators; school-based teacher educators are challenged to supplement their first-order teaching skills with a new repertoire of second-order teaching skills, whilst university teacher educators are challenged to build new forms of partnership with schools and redefine their role. We would argue that the findings from our small-scale study seem to suggest that by working together in a Third Space under the guidance of an experienced teacher

educator acting as a boundary broker, school-based teacher educators have the possibility of **developing their second-order teaching skills**. University teacher educators, for their part, have **the opportunity of reviewing** their partnership practices by assuming the role of boundary broker to support their school-based colleagues in their new role as second-order practitioners. From our study there are some indications that Third-Space activity centred on teacher education, and supported by a boundary broker, may encourage a personal ontological and conceptual shift not only in the SBTEs' teacher education practices, but also in their own class teaching.

As stated above, this study was always intended - drawing on Stake's concept of an instrumental case study - to engender debate and act as another step towards a new way of envisioning teacher education. It is our contention that **new directions for** teacher education, **exploring the benefits of boundary brokering** within a Third Space, suggest a positive move forward to capitalise fully on all that schools and universities can offer to the student teacher.

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